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Ludit imago.— HOR.

In pleasing forms the playful image sports.
ANON.

Much has been said by writers upon the pleasure experienced in the retrospection of past events; of delightful scenes, honorable actions, glories acquired, and dangers escaped. We fondly linger on the contemplation of what

we have done, and what we have suffered: the consciousness of means usefully employed, or bounty liberally diffused, of virtue uniformly practised, and time studiously improved, casts a vivifying light over declining years, and gilds the anticipations of another world with inexpressible delight. The manful hero looks to an honorable grave, as the reward of toils already endured; and the Christian soldier meditates on difficulties encountered and sorrows undergone, as the forerunners of brighter enjoyments, more durable happiness, & more substantial good.

Is not the pleasure of retrospection, in many, derived from that inextinguishable vanity, which all feel within them; which the good endeavor to repress, and the bad cannot restrain? It is natural, and cannot be avoided, but

real, and cannot be concealed. This is proportionate precisely to the extent of talent. The aged farmer, whose ideas never extended, through the course of a long life, beyond the limits of his cultivated grounds, doubtless, swells with rising rapture, when he looks on the hills he has levelled into plains, and the wastes he has converted into gardens; on the verdant lawns his own hands have planted, and the shining fruits his own labor has reared. His exultation is raised upon trifling subjects, but is, nevertheless, more conspicuous than in the scholar, who reflects upon a life of utility, or the statesman, who glories in services constantly rendered, and happiness continually conferred, upon the land of his ancestors, and the country of his birth.

The great charm of retrospection undoubtedly consists in this, that its foundation is permanent and cannot be removed, either by our own, or the will of others. But if this be the case, certainly an equal pleasure accrues to us, when looking forward with tranquillity to years of durable enjoyment, and unalterable delight. But this is a lot which, in the nature of human things, can happen to very few. The greatest misery that most of our race endure, is to be tossed on an ocean of uncertainties, without any fixed point to which the thoughts may wander, and the eyes may look, as the termination of trouble, and the haven of rest. Life is pretty generally a dreary voyage, without any solace to cheer, without any earthly haven in prospect;- and who would not

gladly seize at a resting place, if any where the blessing may be found.?

The world is so made up of deceit, vanity, disappointment, and guilt; its fallacies are so glaring, and its delusions so frequent, that the heart of man would fain find an object, on which to stay his hopes, and fix his contemplations. There is no torture so painful as wavering thought, and doubtful expectation, employed upon objects either of hope or fear. Limited pleasure is incompatibly superior to the torment of a hesitating mind.

The majority of men, owing to this principle of our nature, prefer to increase in substance but slowly, provided that confidence attends their labors. Perhaps in particular instances the fact is more conspicuously illustrated than in

others; being sometimes governed by accidental circumstances, as habit, custom, and character. But in every quarter of the globe, the greater part pursue the steady path, turn their vision from the allurements of vanity, and the attractions of pleasure, and content themselves with the plain but certain road of moderate gain, and simple enjoyment. There are few who are willing to relinquish a station, where, if they have no addition to expect, they have no loss to fear, for the sake of running after the phantoms of fortune, or embarking on the voyage of chance. The assiduous laborer toils through the revolution of years, and, though his employments are intricate, his slumbers are undisturbed, by the inroads of disappointment, and the suggestions of

fancy: while the speculatist, resting upon the shadow of an empty hope, and searching for the prize in the region of adventure, broods on the midnight pillow over the defeat of aspiring projects, and the wreck of towering wishes; laments in secret what he performs in public, and finds the airy visions of theory dissipated by the truths of reality, and the lessons of practice.

In literature, perhaps, the desire of certainty operates upon us more than in any other department of life, because stability in this is so requisite. The ill-starred author, who, by wanton carelessness, or in the simplicity of ignorance, should spend his genius upon useless productions; or cast the results of

anxious meditation upon the barren soil of stupid indifference, or unenlightened barbarity, would find nothing to recompense past toil, nothing to animate future exertion. Accordingly, in this as in other callings, men measure their happiness by the firmness with which they can rely upon the patronage of the great, and the admiration of the good. They cannot awake the lyre of poetic inspiration, or embody their meditations on sober morality, when agitated by the fear of shame, or the dread of neglect. The commencement of the youth's journey, he will doubtless experience this vacillation of feeling, in its most unwelcome form; until, disciplined by trial, and confident

by approbation, he looks forward to the laurels of fame awarded by the children of mortality, and an eternity of glory, when, loosened from the restraint of bodily encumbrances, he soars an ethereal spirit in the regions of eternal day.

As certainty is so essential a requisite to the happiness of the literary workman, does it not rest upon our great ones, to foster by their encouragement the genius that is so widely scattered around them? To whom, but to them, does the task belong? The gripe of poverty too closely presses the negligent multitude, to permit them even to spend a thought upon the solicitudes of the ill-favored victims of intellectual exer-

tion. The votaries of the muse, and the advocates of virtue, the instructor and the philosopher, the moralist and the sage, who elevate the soul with their wisdom, and brighten the world with their goodness, refine the morals & correct the taste, polish the rudeness of language, and correct the licentiousness of verse, have arisen like the flowret that blooms in the desert, and after consuming its odors on the barren waste, perishes, without a hand to rescue it from decay, a eye to notice where it fell.

It is a fortunate circumstance, that other causes than the desire of a name, or the ambition of distinction, excite the energies of mental vigor, and quicken the pen of intellectual ex-

cellence. The ardor of enthu-
siasm, the glow of patriot-
ism, public good, or private
amusement, are the incent-
ives that have enkindled
the fever of the mind, in the
degeneracy of a profligate age,
or in the miseries of penur-
ous obscurity. To look to the
summit of renown as the goal
of our race, though laudd-
ble, is dangerous; as torture-
ing with expectations of
what is too often a baste-
less vision of distempered
feeling. The glory to which
our desires tend, is envell-
oped in clouds, and shrond-
ed in darkness. To improve
the fleeting hour by the
enlargement of the powers
which the creative energy
of God has implanted
in the soul; this is the

end of life, the happiness of the present time, & the light that illumines the darkness of futurity. To instruct others, is to ennoble ourselves: to extend knowledge, dignify science, and embellish piety, are the ornaments of the real scholar, and the praise of the lover of mankind.

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